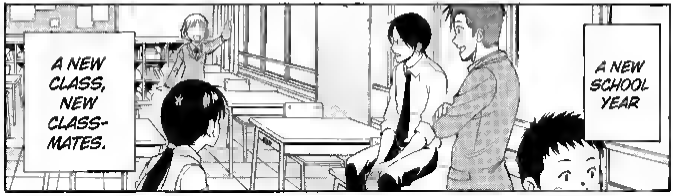
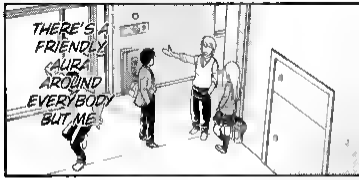
SAKURAN
(TENTATIVE)
BY TOSHIAKI IWASHIRO

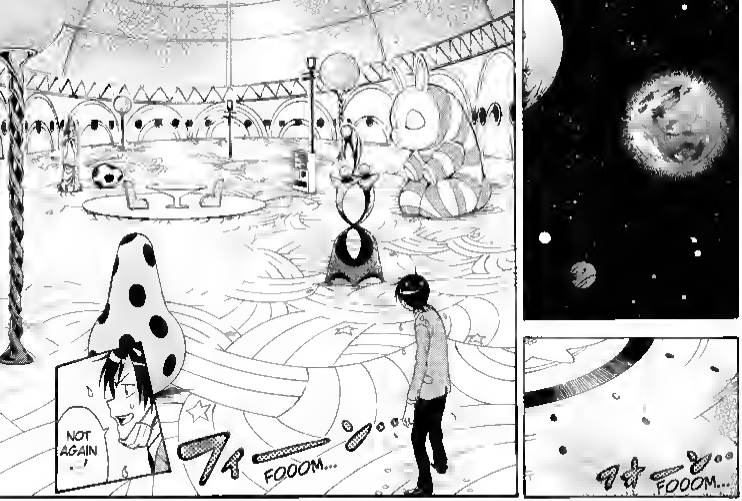
I REALLY HATE SPRING.





OH, TAK-KUN!!
AND STILL NO FRIENDS NO ROMANTIC EXPERIENCE
AND NOW I'M 16 YEARS OLD
UGH
MY HEAD IS ALL STUFFED UP
PLUS, I'VE GOT REALLY BAD ALLERGIES. SPRING SUCKS! NOTHING GOOD EVER HAPPENS IN THE SPRING!
ACHOO!!
...BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.
THE REAL REASON I HATE SPRING SO MUCH!...

...IS BECAUSE OF THAT GUY.
FWOOSH
PSH PSH PSH...
THIS HALLU-CINATION I KEEP HAVING.
AND HE COMES BACK...
FOR NOW, I CALL HIM SAKURAN (TENTATIVE)!
EVERY YEAR, WHEN THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS ARE FLUTTERING AROUND, I GET CAUGHT IN A BLIZZARD OF PETALS...


NOT AGAIN...!
フィーン
FOOOM...
FOOOM...

SAKURAN!!
THIS YEAR TOO?! GET OUT OF HERE, YOU BIG JERK!
コロ...
KLAK...

RAUGH!!
ZASSH!
HUMFH !!!
ONE STRIKE FINISHER !!!!
BZZZ...

WOOSH

WELL, YOU MANAGED TO DEFLECT MY STRIKE, SO WHY DON'T I JUST GO AHEAD AND *TELL YOU MY NAME*, HUH?
THAT'S CUZ EVERY SINGLE TIME YOU MAKE THE SAME SURPRISE ATTACK, YOU IDIOT!
ZZT ZZT ZZT ZZT
HEH HEH... YOU SEEM TO *HUMFH* HAVE GOTTEN A LITTLE BETTER, EITA...!!!

FWOO
HUFH !!
BAM!
YEAH RIGHT, LIKE I'M GONNA FALL FOR THAT ONE!!

HE'S AN IMAGI-NARY ALIEN.
FOR FIVE YEARS, HE'S BEEN MAKING HIMSELF AT HOME IN MY HEAD.

HUMFH!! FIGURED ME OUT, HUH?

THIS IS SAKURAN (TENTATIVE).

SHUT UP, IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!!
I WONDER, HAVE YOU FINALLY MADE SOME FRIENDS THIS YEAR?
PHEW...
EITA JINBO! I HAVE BEEN MAKING AN OBSERVATION LOG OF YOU FOR NEARLY FIVE YEARS NOW.
HE APPEARED FIVE YEARS AGO, IN THE SPRING.
I DON'T CARE! GO BOTHER SOMEONE ELSE, THEN!
THIS ISN'T TURNING OUT TO BE A VERY GOOD BIOLOGICAL STUDY.
YOU NEED TO TRY A BIT HARDER.
AH, YES HELLO, I AM FROM THE PLANET URARA.
AAAH! A GHOST!!
HUMFH HUMFH
WHERE IN THE WORLD AM I ?!
WH?!
I WAS SUPER OUT OF IT FROM MY ALLERGIES AND WHEN I FINALLY REALIZED WHAT WAS GOING ON...
HUH?
YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO BE A SAMPLE FOR PLANET URARA'S BIOLOGICAL STUDY OF AN EARTHLING.
HUMFH.
CONGRATULATIONS, EITA JINBO.

ゴゴゴ...
VRM VRM VRM...
WOOSH...
WHERE AM I?!
THIS IS THE INTERIOR OF AN URARAN SPACESHIP.
ESPACIO!!!
Σ(SPACE)
SPANISH...
BUT FROM NOW ON...
I WILL BE WATCHING YOUR EVERY MOVE, HUMFH!!!
T-TAKE ME HOME RIGHT NOW!!!
ALL RIGHT, I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.
IN ORDER TO LEARN ABOUT EARTHLINGS...
I WILL BE OBSERVING YOUR LIFESTYLE...!
THAT IS MY MISSION, HUMFH!!
ゴゴゴ
VRM VRM VRM..
I WILL JUST BE WATCHING. JUST THAT... HUMFH.
SO...FEEL FREE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE TOTALLY NORMALLY, EITA... HUMFH...

WHAT?!
I'LL TAKE YOU HOME WITH ME TO PLANET URARA!!!
FOR-EVER!
AND AFTER FIVE YEARS GO BY...
YOU JUST NEED TO GUESS MY NAME WITHIN THOSE FIVE YEARS!
WELL, ALL RIGHT, SINCE YOU'RE SPECIAL, I'LL GIVE YOU A CHANCE.
BUT THAT'S THE LAST STAGE OF A BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH MISSION...
YOU LIED TO ME!! THIS ISN'T JUST AN OBSERVATIONAL MISSION AT ALL!
W-WAIT! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT?!
WELL, SEE YAAA!
T T T FSHHHHHH
IF YOU MANAGE TO GUESS MY NAME, I WON'T TAKE YOU WITH ME.
AND I'LL EVEN GIVE YOU A HINT! MY NAME...
YOU'LL GET ONE CHANCE A YEAR, SO FIVE CHANCES IN ALL.
...IS A WORD THAT YOU KNOW, FROM YOUR PLANET, AND EVEN YOUR COUNTRY!
FOOSHHH...
I SAID WAIT!!
FWIP

FROM THEN ON, I CALLED THE HALLUCINATION THAT I GOT EVERY YEAR "SAKURAN."
IT WAS ALL A DREAM
A DREAM
ARE YOU JUST NO GOOD WITH PEOPLE?
AND WHAT WAS WITH THAT ATTITUDE WHEN FUJISAKI TRIED SO KINDLY TO TALK TO YOU?
LEAVE ME ALONE.
DIDN'T MAKE ANY FRIENDS THIS YEAR EITHER, HUMPH?
ON AND ON <
EVERY SINGLE YEAR WHEN IT TURNS TO SPRING
AND YOU COULD'A GONE ON THAT CAMPING TRIP WITH THE REST OF THE KIDS IN AUGUST!
REALLY, WHAT'S THIS HALLUCINATION GOING TO DO TO ME...?
AND THIS YEAR'S GUESS-THE-NAME QUIZ IS MY LAST CHANCE.
AND NOW, WITH THIS THAT AND THE OTHER, IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS

YOU HAVE BAD TASTE IN INTERIOR DESIGN!
WHA...!
HERE ARE YOUR ANSWERS FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS. "SPRING URARA," "HUMFREY," "HUMFSENPFEFFER," AND "HUM."
NO, I'M NOT!
BRING ME TO PLANET URARA OR WHEREVER, DO WHATEVER YOU WANT!
HUMFH, ARE YOU EVEN TRYING?
I'M TRYING REALLY HARD TO EVOKE CURRENT POPULAR STYLES THOUGH...
BAD TASTE? SHOULD I CHANGE IT?
...
NAH, IT'S FINE LIKE IT IS.
OH... OKAY.
WELL NOW.
IN OCTOBER, YOU HAD A FIGHT WITH MURAKAMI'S GROUP, RIGHT?
THERE WAS NO WAY YOU WERE GOING TO WIN AGAINST THEM... AND FROM THEN ON YOU WERE COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE CLASS.
VERY STRANGE FOR YOU...
...WHY DID YOU DO THAT?
...TO BE THE ONE THROWING THE FIRST PUNCH.

THE PENDANT I ALWAYS WEAR
HUH?
...AH... THAT'S RIGHT.
HE MADE FUN OF MY PENDANT.
AS PUNISHMENT FROM MY SUBCONSCIOUS FOR WHAT I DID BACK THEN
A CHILD-HOOD FRIEND GAVE IT TO ME.
THESE HALLU-CINATIONS STARTED...
BACK THEN

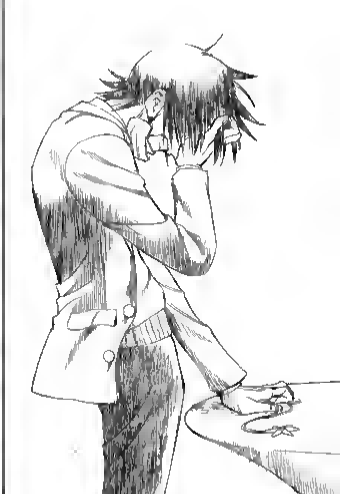
...WHEN I FELL IN LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT...
FOR CONTINUING MY CAREFREE LIFE AFTER BETRAYING THAT GIRL...

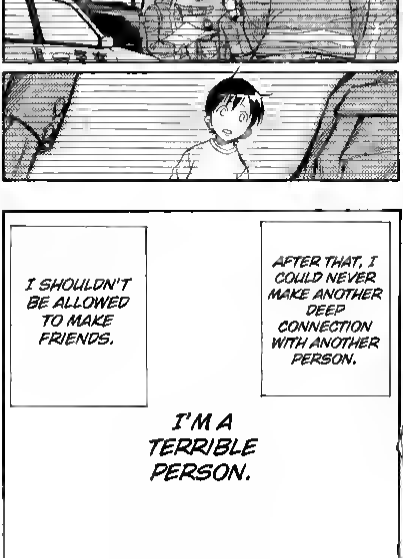
THIS IS MEANT TO MAKE ME REMEMBER...
THAT'S IT.
IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU, EH?
IT'S MEANT TO MAKE IT SO I NEVER FORGET...
MIRIKA...
THAT'S WHY SAKURAN APPEARED BEFORE ME.
MIRIKA MINAZUKI.
I'M KINDA SCARED.
HEY, MIRIKA. LET'S GO HOME.

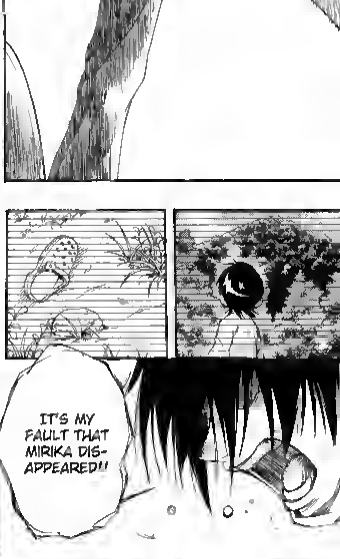
WELL, UM....
...MAYBE TO LOOK AT THE STARS.
WHY DO YOU WANNA GO THERE?!
THE FOURTH PEAK?! THAT'S THE FURTHEST ONE OF ALL! THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN MAKE IT!
BUT... WE HAVE TO GO.
TONIGHT, WE HAVE TO GO TO THE FOURTH PEAK OF UROKIPI MOUNTAIN.
WILL YOU PLEASE COME WITH ME?
SO I WANT TO GO SEE THE STARS WITH YOU.
I...THINK THIS MIGHT BE THE LAST TIME I GET TO PLAY WITH YOU, BITA.
THEN I'LL JUST GO BY MYSELF.
OH, OKAY.
SORRY... MY DAD WILL GET MAD AT ME...

I DIDN'T THINK I'D REALLY NEVER SEE HER AGAIN!!

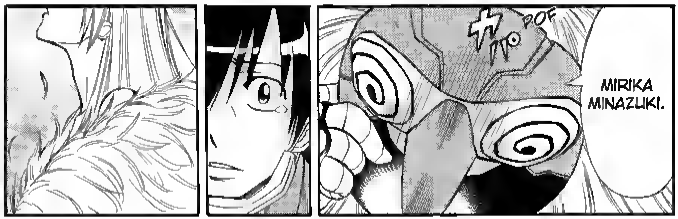
I SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH HER!!

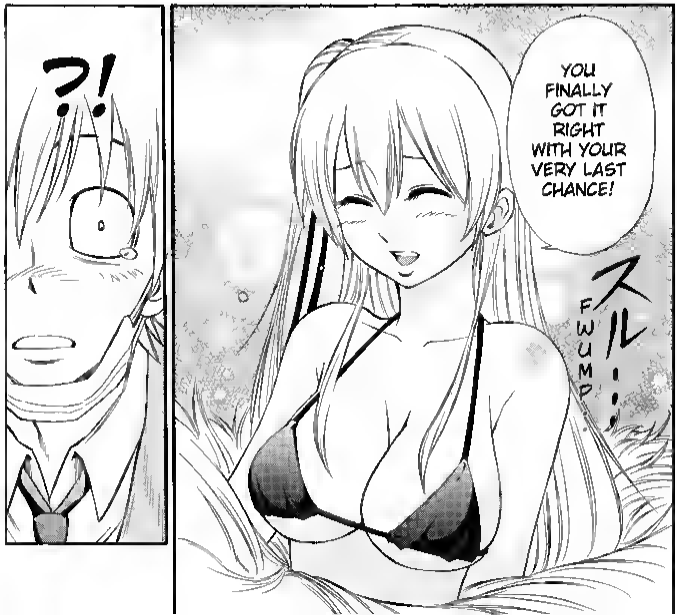



I SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO MAKE FRIENDS.
AFTER THAT, I COULD NEVER MAKE ANOTHER DEEP CONNECTION WITH ANOTHER PERSON.
I'M A TERRIBLE PERSON.

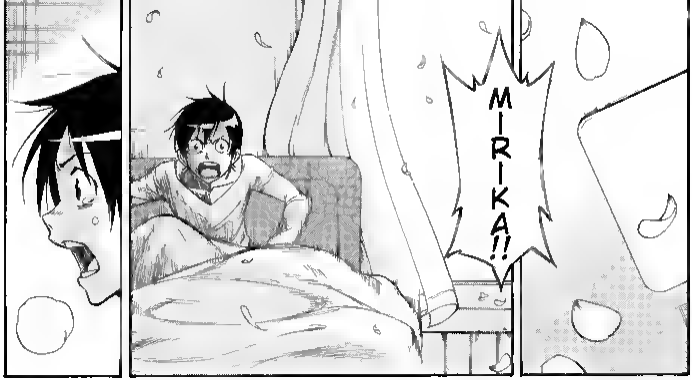

IT'S MY FAULT THAT MIRIKA DIS-APPEARED!!

I GET IT, SAKURAN!
I GET IT ALREADY.
SO... JUST STOP THESE HALLU-CINATIONS!!!

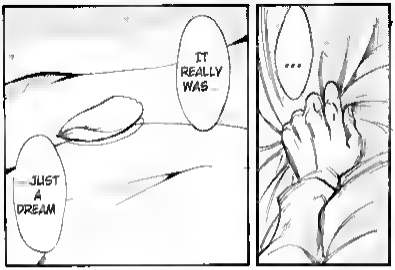

POF
MIRIKA MINAZUKI.


?!
YOU FINALLY GOT IT RIGHT WITH YOUR VERY LAST CHANCE!
スル...
FWUMP

HUH?!
I MISSED YOU SO MUCH, I CAME TO SEE YOU!
YO!
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MANY RULES THERE ARE ABOUT IT!
SORRY I HAD TO DO IT THIS WAY...
MIRIKA!!
THANK YOU, EITA!!
I'M SO HAPPY THAT YOU REMEMBERED ME!


MIRIKA!!

WHAT AM I DISAPPOINTED FOR?
A HALLUCINATION.

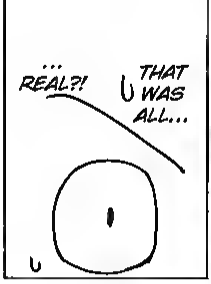

IT REALLY WAS
JUST A DREAM
...

QUIET DOWN! I HAVE A TRANSFER STUDENT TO INTRODUCE TO YOU.

I GUESS I'M FINE WITH THAT...
SNIFF...

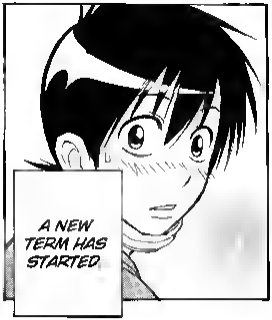
THE HALLUCI-NATIONS ARE OVER.
I BET SAKURAN WON'T EVER APPEAR AGAIN

I'M MIRIKA MINAZUKI!
I'M SUPER PLEASED TO MEET YOU ALL!! LET'S BE FRIENDS, HUMFH!
HUMFH?
モフ?
SHE'S CUTE
かわいい
HUMFH?
モフ?
HUMFH?
モフ?
DID YOU THINK IT WAS ALL A HALLU-CINATION?

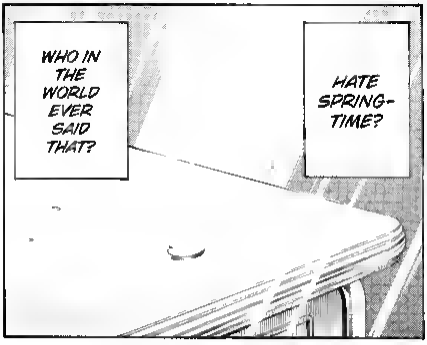

...REAL?!
THAT WAS ALL...

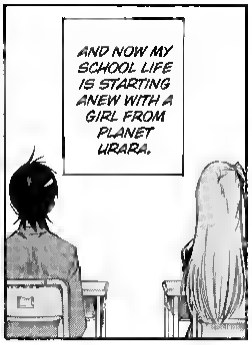
EITA!
HUH?
ナス?
HUH?

AND NOW MY MISSION HAS CHANGED BACK TO MORE HANDS-ON INFILTRATION RESEARCH!
WELL, TOO BAD! I'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE REAL MIRIKA!!


A NEW TERM HAS STARTED.

THIS TIME, I'M HERE WITH YOU FOR GOOD.


WHO IN THE WORLD EVER SAID THAT?
I HATE SPRING-TIME?


AND NOW MY SCHOOL LIFE IS STARTING ANEW WITH A GIRL FROM PLANET URARA.

THE END